

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CAIRO 007782

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/11/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [EG](#)

SUBJECT: PDAS LIZ CHENEY'S SEPTEMBER 28 MEETING WITH GAMAL MUBARAK

Classified by DCM Stuart Jones for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

-----  
Summary  
-----

11. (C) In a September 28 meeting with PDAS Elizabeth Cheney, Gamal Mubarak, head of the NDP Policies Committee, reviewed his father's presidential election campaign, which he argued had been a major success. He also reviewed the ruling party's preparations for the upcoming parliamentary elections. PDAS Cheney reminded Gamal of the paramount importance that the USG places on international monitoring and urged him to use his influence to encourage the GOE/NDP to undertake other concrete improvements in the electoral process. Significant improvements in the parliamentary elections, the PDAS noted, would be crucial to continuing Egypt's democratic reform progress. End summary.

-----  
The NDP's Campaign Architect Reviews His Creation  
-----

12. (C) PDAS Cheney, joined by DAS Carpenter, Charge, and poloff (notetaker) met with Gamal Mubarak on September 28 to discuss Egypt's political reform progress. Gamal opened the meeting with questions about Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. PDAS Cheney updated Gamal on cleanup and recovery efforts and thanked him for GOE relief supplies. The Charge noted that Washington had been gratified by the speed of the GOE airlift to supply water, blankets, and other items.

13. (C) Turning to the September 7 presidential election, Gamal noted that he and his NDP colleagues had been working on the campaign since the end of June, when President Mubarak had indicated that "he wanted a proper campaign team." Gamal said the team, which included Ahmad Ezz and Mohammad Kamal, used focus groups and polling to fine tune the President's message. After the campaign team devised a "credible program," which the NDP "simplified" to address focus group concerns, the party used the campaign period (August 17-September 3) to reach out to voters.

14. (C) Gamal noted that his father had directed the party to "run a positive campaign," and to respond only to attacks that misrepresented policy. Gamal attributed the NDP's success to a packed schedule of campaign events (nearly one major event per day) along with DVC outreach to provincial party leaders, and personal letters from the President to each of the party's 7000 "basic unit leaders" (i.e., precinct bosses). According to Gamal, the precinct bosses were "absolutely crucial" and the "backbone" of an effort to "fire up" youthful NDP voters. In response to a question by the PDAS, Gamal said that his father had much enjoyed the "intensity" of the campaign as well as his engagement with party activists. Gamal said that the final event of the campaign, the closing rally at Abdeen Palace in Cairo, had been a "big success," since it linked the President to key episodes in Egyptian historical memory.

15. (C) The PDAS noted the USG's continuing encouragement of the GOE to invite international observers, and pressed Gamal to identify areas that he thought could be improved in future elections. Gamal described Egypt's outdated and incoherent voter lists as "not a huge issue," but noted that cleaning them up would be a long-term project. He blamed the low turnout of the presidential election (about 7 million voters or 23 percent) on overzealous judges supervising the September 7 ballot who had, allegedly, refused to allow more than one voter at a time into polling stations, and thereby diminished turnout. "We were aiming for at least nine million voters, but many people went home without voting because of the queues," Gamal said.

16. (C) Gamal termed the controversy over domestic observers on election day as "a huge mess," and noted that the party had tried to play a constructive role on this issue, behind the scenes, despite the obstructionism of the Presidential Election Commission and some of the judges. The PDAS reiterated the USG's views on international monitors and urged him to use his influence in support of both international and domestic monitors.

-----  
Plans for the Parliamentary Elections  
-----

-----  
17. (C) Turning to the parliamentary elections, which will be held in three stages beginning on November 8, Gamal said that a central difference with the presidential campaign would be that campaigning for the 444 parliamentary races "would be the party's effort, not the President's." The President plans to campaign on behalf of some candidates, however and the Party plans to use the same Heliopolis campaign headquarters and core team, although this team will be "adjusted for the battle."

18. (C) The PDAS asked how the party plans to select its candidates. Gamal noted that the party's selection process hadn't worked in the past, since it permitted candidates with deep pockets to win the party endorsement even if they were not able to win at the polls. (Note: In the 2000 elections, official NDP candidates won less than 40 percent of the seats. Most winners were so-called "NDP independents" who had not managed to secure the party's endorsement but nevertheless prevailed at the poll and eventually rejoined the party, thereby giving the NDP its lock on Parliament. End note.)

19. (C) Gamal provided an overview of the new process. He said that the party would hold "primaries" during the first week of October, which would assemble precinct bosses and other grass roots leaders to bet potential candidates. Gamal said that in addition to this popularity contest, the party would use polling, analysis of the voting in the presidential election, and a "software" analysis to create a single consolidated party slate of candidates.

-----  
But How Will They Be Better than Last Time?  
-----

110. (C) Gamal said that the parliamentary elections would be "both messier and easier" than the presidential election. The PDAS pressed Gamal to suggest steps that the GOE could take in the next few weeks to demonstrate its commitment to political reform. In response to the PDAS's inquiry about the GOE utilizing transparent ballot boxes in place of the existing wooden boxes, Gamal described them as "cosmetic." For Egypt, he said, the key is judicial supervision. Gamal also dismissed alleged problems with indelible ink, multiple voting, and voting by unregistered citizens. All of these allegations, he said, were "unfounded."

111. (C) More important, he argued had been the information deficit. Voters had sometimes not known which polling stations to report to, and the lists of registered voters had not been widely available ahead of time. Improving the available information about the polling station locations and access was Gamal's highest priority. "If I was in charge," he said, "this is what I'd do."

112. (C) The PDAS ask Gamal about the period after the parliamentary election. He replied that Egypt's unregistered voters were now excited about politics and enthusiastic to register to vote in future elections, when the registration period opens in late 2005. The PDAS asked if any opposition party would get the five percent of the parliamentary seats need to field a future presidential candidate. Gamal shrugged and replied that this would depend on the opposition parties' organization and discipline. Might the GOE revise Article 76 again, the PDAS asked, if an opposition party failed to get the required five percent? Gamal replied that talk of additional modification of Article 76 was premature: "the ink is not yet dry," he said.

113. (C) He also argued that the special candidacy rules in 2005, to encourage multiple presidential candidates, could not be extended in future elections. The somewhat less restrictive rules for 2005 had been necessary, he said, as an incentive to the parties to "get their acts together." In the long term, however, encouragement of fringe candidates who do not have significant parliamentary representation would be a recipe for "chaos."

114. (C) The PDAS sought Gamal's views on rumors that the President plans to appoint a vice president. Gamal professed ignorance on the subject. Should the President appoint a VP, the PDAS asked. Gamal paused for a moment then said some people argue the President should name a Vice President, while others say that the new amendment to the Constitution makes a vice president unnecessary. Gamal said, "I listen to both arguments."

-----  
A Man in Full?  
-----

115. (C) At Gamal's invitation, the PDAS and DAS later attended the gala reception on September 29 hosted by the NDP for the diplomatic corps on the occasion of the party's

annual conference. Members of the diplomatic corps, including the Iranian Ambassador, gathered around Gamal vying for his attention and the opportunity to shake his hand. Party old-guard figures Kemal al-Shazli and Safwat Sherif stood together off to the side while Gamal was clearly the center of the show. Minister of Tourism, Ahmed Maghrabi, told the PDAS that members of the new guard received loud and prolonged applause whenever they took the podium at the party congress. The reception for old guard figures, by contrast, was muted and polite. Judging from this, Maghrabi said, "I don,t think the old guard will be with us much longer."

116. (U) PDAS Cheney cleared this message.

RICCIARDONE